CRITICAL ROLE
VOX MACHINA™
ORIGINS

VOLUME IV

MATTHEW MERCER | JODY HOUSER | NOAH HAYES
DIANA SOUSA | ARIANA MAHER

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HELLO? SIR GREGORY FINCE?

WE WERE SENT BY...A *FRIEND* OF YOURS.

THE ONE WHO BROKE YOUR DOOR IS *THIS* GUY, *PERCY LOTTANAMES.*

YOU KNOW, IF *SOMEONE* HAS TO PAY FOR IT.

SCANLAN...

WURPH?

OOF! AND SORRY ABOUT THE BEAR!

NICE MOVES, KEYLETH. I THINK YOU GET TO KEEP IT NOW!

YOU KNOW, I'M ***STARTING*** TO THINK HE MIGHT NOT BE HOME.

EXCELLENT INSIGHT, GROG. I'M ***SO*** HAPPY YOU'RE HERE TO TELL US THESE THINGS.

THAT... THAT REALLY MEANS A ***LOT,*** VEX.

EVERYONE, OVER HERE.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO SIR FINCE, IT LOOKS LIKE IT INTERRUPTED DINNER.

MAYBE THE ***GHOSTS*** GOT HIM.

NOT FUNNY, SCANLAN.

IT DOESN'T ***LOOK*** LIKE ANYONE BESIDES US BROKE IN. THOUGH IF VAX WERE HERE, HE COULD TELL FOR SURE.

STILL, THERE HAS TO BE ***SOME*** KIND OF CLUE AS TO WHAT HAPPENED HERE THAT ***WE*** CAN FIND.

NOPE. NO CLUES HERE.

UUUUUUUUWWWWH

HOW MANY SOUVENIR TANKARDS DOES ONE PERSON ***REALLY*** NEED?

NOTHING UP THERE.

EXCEPT PROOF OF AN ABSOLUTELY ***ABYSMAL*** TASTE IN DÉCOR.

I SUPPOSE THAT JUST LEAVES THE CREEPY BASEMENT.

YOU NEVER KNOW! MAYBE IT'S A ***SEXY*** BASEMENT!

NOPE. DEFINITELY A CREEPY BASEMENT.

GAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!

MAYBE I WAS TOO QUICK TO JUDGE...

SHH!

UP AHEAD.

OH NO...

WHAT DO YOU THINK... TONGUE NEXT?

"ALL RIGHT, WHERE TO START..."

WE NEED SOMEONE OF ***IMPORTANCE*** TO INTERROGATE.

SOMEONE WHO WOULD HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF ***ALL*** OF THE CLASP'S DEALS MADE HERE IN EMON.

SOMEONE IMPORTANT...

...OR SOMEONE ***NOSY.***

WE WON'T FIND ***EITHER*** UP HERE.

FOLLOW ME. AND KEEP ***QUIET.***

RIGHT. SURE. ***TOTALLY*** NOT A PROBLEM.

AW ***CRAP.***

CLANK

CLANK

CLANK

KACLAAANK

WHAT WAS THAT?

YOU HEAR SOMETHING?

OVER THERE...

OW.

THIS IS WHY I DON'T WORK WITH AMATEURS.

AW CRAAAAAAP.

SHOW YOURSELF!

JUST STAY *HIDDEN.* DON'T--

RAAAAH!

OKAY, BUT IT'S *YOUR FUNERAL,* BUDDY!

...DON'T DO *THAT.*

WHO *ELSE* WANTS A PIECE?!

SHIT!

THUNK

THUNK

THUNK

THANKS. AND, UH, SORRY.

YOU CAN APOLOGIZE AFTER WE GET OUT OF HERE.

THINK WE CAN TAKE THEM?

EASILY.

...BUT MAYBE NOT THEM.

INTRUDERS!

GET THEM!

DON'T LET THEM ESCAPE!

"THERE'S ONLY TWO OF THEM."

TWO AND A *HOSTAGE*, VEX. THAT CHANGES THE ODDS.

MAYBE IF WE CAN MOVE FAST ENOUGH, DISTRACT THEM...

WOOPS, MISSED THE TONGUE!

AAAAARGH!

HAHAHA! *NEVER* GETS OLD!

NOT SO SURE THEY *HAVE* A HOSTAGE ANYMORE.

THEN WE MOVE IN *NOW.*

AW, I THINK YOU *BROKE* OUR TOY.

THNK

...OW.

SO, YOU'RE NOT GHOSTS, HUH?
YOUR MISTAKE!

RUUUUUUUNGH

WHO'S THE *VERY BEST* BEAR?

I MEAN, I WAS *PRETTY GOOD* TOO...

KEYLETH!

CAN YOU HELP HIM?

I CAN *TRY*...

I'M SORRY. HE'S ALREADY GONE.

MAYBE IF *PIKE* WERE HERE...

WELL, LOOKS LIKE WE WON'T BE GETTING ANSWERS OUT OF FINCE *OR* HIS CAPTORS.

BUT LUCKILY, IT LOOKS LIKE WE *DID* FIND FINCE'S WORKSHOP.

BLAH BLAH BLAH CLUES BLAH BLAH BLAH INFORMATION BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH READ BLAH BLAH

I'M BETTING IF HE WROTE DOWN ANYTHING IMPORTANT, IT WILL BE *HERE.*

AND THAT'S *NOT FUNNY,* GROG.

SORRY, VEX. BUT IT'S A *LITTLE* FUNNY.

VEX HAS THE RIGHT OF IT. OUR ANSWERS LIKELY LIE HERE.

LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN DO TO MAKE SURE SIR FINCE *DIDN'T* DIE IN VAIN.

IT LOOKS LIKE ***GENERAL KRIEG*** IS IN CHARGE OF THE INVESTIGATION OF THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON WINTER'S CREST.

FINCE SEEMS TO THINK KRIEG IS TAKING IT ***PERSONALLY,*** SINCE HE STOPPED THE ATTEMPT HIMSELF.

IT SAYS HERE THAT THAT URIEL HAS BEEN KEEPING HIS ***ENTIRE*** FAMILY CONFINED WITHIN THE CARDINAL CHAMBER.

HE'S HARDLY BEEN LETTING ANYONE ELSE IN. AND ***NO ONE*** FROM THE COUNCIL.

"URIEL'S BRUTAL 'INVESTIGATION' HAS SHIFTED FOCUS TO THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL. THOSE HE SHOULD ***MOST*** TRUST."

"I'M BEGINNING TO SUSPECT THAT THERE ARE ***OTHER*** FORCES AT WORK HERE. AN AGENDA ***BEYOND*** JUSTICE..."

YEAH, I'M NOT READING THIS.

SOUNDS LIKE FINCE WAS WORRIED HE WAS BEING FOLLOWED.

YOU'RE ***HARDLY*** PARANOID IF YOU END UP ***DEAD.***

MORE QUESTIONS HERE THAN ANSWERS, AND NO ONE LEFT ALIVE TO ***EXTRACT*** ANSWERS FROM.

REMEMBER, WE AREN'T THE ***ONLY*** ONES INVESTIGATING RIGHT NOW.

"I'M *SURE* VAX AND PIKE ARE HAVING BETTER LUCK THAN WE ARE."

UP AND AT 'EM.

BOSS WANTS TO TALK.

NO... *NNNNGH...* BREAKFAST IN BED?

KEEP BEING A WISE GUY AND *YOU'LL* BE THE BREAKFAST.

WELL, WELL, *WELL...*

...WHAT DO WE HAVE *HERE?*

A FELLOW MEMBER OF THE CLASP. VISITING FROM WESTRUUN.

HAH! HAHAHA!

HAHAHAH, YOU HEAR THAT? THIS BACKWATER TRASH THINKS HE'S ONE OF US!

WELL THEN, BOY. IF YOU CLAIM TO BE ONE OF US...

...WHAT WERE YOU DOING SKULKING AROUND LIKE A TRESPASSER?

WE'RE ALL THIEVES HERE. SKULKING IS KIND OUR THING, ISN'T IT?

NOT VERY GOOD AT IT, ARE YOU?

I'VE HAD BETTER DAYS, I'LL ADMIT.

AND WHY DID YOU HAPPEN TO BE SKULKING HERE?

HOPING TO LEARN MORE ABOUT A JOB THAT WENT THROUGH THE WESTRUUN CHAPTER.

SO, A *SPY* THEN.

WHO ARE YOU WORKING WITH?

THE HEALER HERE, MY TWIN SISTER, HER PET BEAR, A RICH PONCE WITH *FAR* TOO MANY NAMES, A DISTURBINGLY HORNY GNOME, AN INCREDIBLY BEAUTIFUL--

--SWEET DRUID, AND WHAT I'M CONVINCED IS A SEMI-SENTIENT KEG OF ALE WITH AN AXE.

ARE THEY DOWN HERE TOO?

NO. THEY'RE FOLLOWING *ANOTHER* LEAD.

BUT SURELY, SOMEONE AT *YOUR* LEVEL WOULD KNOW ABOUT *ALL* OF THE DEALS COMING OUT OF THIS BRANCH.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE *DRAGON STONE* THAT WAS DELIVERED TO WESTRUUN?

AH YES. IT ***WAS*** THE CLASP WHO FACILITATED THAT DELIVERY.

WE MADE ***QUITE*** A BIT OF COIN FROM THAT JOB.

OF COURSE, THE CLASP RARELY ACTS AS A MERE DELIVERY SERVICE. ***HARDLY*** A WORTHY USE OF OUR SKILLS.

IT'S ONLY THE MOST ***VALUABLE*** OF CARGO THAT'S WORTH WHAT ***WE*** CHARGE. OR THE MOST ***DANGEROUS.***

OF COURSE. THAT'S ***JUST*** GOOD BUSINESS, ISN'T IT?

UH, DOES THE BOSS SEEM...***UNUSUALLY*** OPEN TO YOU?

GOOD FOR HIM. I ***ALWAYS*** THOUGHT GOOD COMMUNICATION WAS THE BEST WAY TO FOSTER HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.

MUST HAVE HOOKED A ***BIG*** FISH THEN.

HOW MANY CAN AFFORD TO PAY THE CLASP ***THAT*** KIND OF COIN?

AMBITIOUS ***COUNCIL MEMBERS*** MAKE FOR EXCEPTIONALLY ***PROFITABLE*** CLIENTS.

EVEN IF THEIR ASKS ARE ***UNIQUELY*** CHALLENG--

WAIT A MINUTE...

YOU THERE! GNOME! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

GAH!

PIKE!

SMAK

I KNEW IT.

I'M SURE YOU THINK YOU'RE *VERY* CLEVER, USING *MAGIC* TO TEASE OUT A BIT OF TRUTH LIKE THAT.

I THINK I HAVE A *LOT* OF POSITIVE TRAITS, ACTUALLY.

TOO BAD STEALTH ISN'T ONE OF THEM.

OF COURSE, I *CAN'T* LET YOU LIVE NOW THAT YOU KNOW TOO MUCH.

NOW, NOW...LET'S NOT BE *TOO* HASTY.

I'M *SURE* WE COULD WORK OUT SOME KIND OF DEAL.

WHY DON'T WE ALL LET *WILLIAM* DO THE HONORS?

AFTER ALL, HE HASN'T BEEN *FED* YET.

HELL YES!

BLOOD! BLOOD! BLOOD!

WILLIAM TIME!

WILLIAM?

"WHAT WE *NEED* IS A NAME."

SIR FINCE *MUST* HAVE BEEN GETTING TOO CLOSE TO *SOMEONE.*

IF YOU'RE TRYING TO STAY HIDDEN, YOU *DON'T* KILL SOMEONE AS HIGH-PROFILE AS A COUNCIL MEMBER WITHOUT GOOD REASON.

IT WOULD BE A LOT EASIER TO PUT TOGETHER A TIMELINE IF HE HAD *DATED* MORE OF HIS NOTES.

HE PROBABLY DIDN'T EXPECT A BUNCH OF STRANGERS TO BE GOING THROUGH THEM AFTER HE WAS TORTURED TO DEATH BY DEVILS.

WELL, HE CLEARLY *SHOULD* HAVE.

HE *MUST* HAVE TRUSTED OR ASKED QUESTIONS OF THE WRONG PERSON.

IF WE CAN WORK OUT WHOM HE LAST SPOKE TO ABOUT THIS...

KLIK

DOES ANYONE ELSE HEAR--

-THAAAAAAAAT!

AAAAAAAHHHHHHHH!

SPLASH SPLASH SPLASH SPLISH

I CAN'T *BELIEVE* IT...AFTER *ALL* WE'VE BEEN THROUGH...

JUST LIKE THAT, THEY'RE *GONE.*

YOU... YOU MEAN...

OUR FRIENDS ARE DEAD!

STILL *VERY* MUCH ALIVE, GROG, THANK YOU!

...OH.

COULD *REALLY* USE A HAND TOO.

CAN YOU THROW DOWN A ROPE OR SOMETHING?

SURE THING, VEX!

DO *YOU* HAVE A ROPE?

DON'T THINK SO. DO *YOU*?

NOPE.

TRINKET! *GOOD* BEAR!

I'M SORRY I *EVER* THOUGHT ABOUT EATING YOU!

WUUUUGH?

DO YOU HAVE *MORE* ROPE?

IF ONE OF YOU COMES DOWN THE ROPE, I *THINK* I CAN REACH A VINE UP TO YOU?

MAYBE DO MORE THAN *THINK*, KEYLETH.

LET IT NEVER BE SAID THAT *SCANLAN SHORTHALT* LEAVES HIS *PLATONIC* FRIENDS IN--

UH. *SMALL* PROBLEM...

SORRY, TRINKET! DON'T WANNA GET LEFT BEHIND!

GWUUUUH!

LOOK OUT BELOW!

OOOF!

SPLASH SPLISH SPLASH

FANTASTIC RESCUE. *REALLY* TOP NOTCH.

LOOKS LIKE WE'LL BE HERE FOR A *LITTLE* WHILE LONGER--

GLUG GLUG GLUG

THIS IS WHY YOU *DON'T* TEMPT THE FATES, PERCY DARLING.

GLUG GLUG GLUG

"THESE ACCOMMODATIONS ARE *TERRIBLE.*"

NO DINNER, *TERRIBLE* DRINK SELECTION, *NO* PRIVACY...

I WAS HOPING FOR A MINT ON MY PILLOW.

GO ON, MAKE YOUR JOKES...

...WHILE YOU TWO STILL HAVE FACES.

OOF!

UH, VAX? WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

BETTING, PIKE.

THEY'RE *BETTING.*

GRRRRRRRRRRRR...

IN *OUR* FAVOR, I HOPE?

PROBABLY NOT.

GUESS THAT'S WILLIAM.

SHALL WE *INTRODUCE* OURSELVES?

IT'S THE *POLITE* THING TO DO.

=GASP=

=SPUTTER=

THUNK

HEY! WHAT'S *THAT* FOR?!

WHERE *ARE* WE?

NEVER HEARD OF A *LAKE* UNDER EMON.

LOOK OVER THERE! I THINK IT'S SOME KIND OF ISLAND!

UGH. WET BOOTS.

YOU KNOW, I BET YOU COULD MAKE A *REAL* KILLING SELLING OFF THE LAND DOWN HERE.

I CAN SEE IT NOW! AFFORDABLE *WATERFRONT PROPERTY* IN THE HEART OF EMON!

THAT *ONLY* WORKS IF WE CAN GET OUT OF HERE.

I DON'T SEE ANY *OPENINGS* OVER THERE...

BUT THOSE CRYSTALS LOOK LIKE THEY MIGHT HAVE SOME KIND OF MAGIC?

MAYBE WE *WON'T* LEAVE HERE EMPTY-HANDED...

GURGLE

ANYONE ELSE *HEAR* THAT?

UH, AFFORDABLE WATERFRONT PROPERTY WITH *GREAT* FISHING?

GURGLE

THERE'S *SOMETHING* THERE.

UNDER THE WATER.

IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S CIRCLING US...

RARELY A GOOD SIGN.

SPLASH SPLASH

SURGE

ARE WE GOING TO HAVE TO FIGHT *EVERYTHING* WE MEET TODAY?

OOOH! I *HOPE* SO!

"BEST DAY EVER!"

YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN *THAT,* WILLIAM.

RIGHT. PRISONER. NO DAGGERS.

THIS *MIGHT* BE A BIT OF A PROBLEM WITHOUT WEAPONS.

TELL ME ABOUT IT.

WE NEED A PLAN. AND *QUICKLY.*

CAN YOU *DISTRACT* IT?

I HAVE AN IDEA, BUT I NEED A MOMENT TO *CONCENTRATE...*

LET'S JUST HOPE WILLIAM PREFERS THE *BIGGER* MEAL TO THE *EASIER* SNACK.

EAT HIS FACE!

GET HIM, WILLIAM!

MORE BLOOD!

OH SHIT.

CHNG

YOU'RE FREE, WILLIAM.

DOESN'T REVENGE ON THOSE WHO ***HELD*** YOU AND ***STARVED*** YOU SOUND--

NEED A LITTLE ***MORE*** PLAN, PICKLE!

ON IT!

THWACK!

SKREEEEE!!!

HE'S FREE! WILLIAM'S FREE!

SHIT! RUN!

I'M TOO PRETTY TO DIE!

OKAY. GOOD PLAN.
I'M PRETTY PROUD OF IT.
NOW, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

CREEEEEE-EAAAK

LOOKS LIKE WE'RE CLEAR. COME ON.

WHERE *ARE* WE?

BACK ON THE STREET LEVEL, IT WOULD SEEM.

CLOSED FOR REFURBISHMENT

HOPEFULLY, THE OTHERS ARE HAVING ***BETTER*** LUCK FINDING CLUES THAN WE ARE.

I HOPE PIKE AND MY BROTHER ARE HAVING *BETTER* LUCK THAN WE ARE.

HEY, WE MAYBE FOUND A WAY OUT!

I'D SAY WE'RE DOING *PRETTY* WELL FOR OURSELVES.

TEMPTING THE FATES *AGAIN? REALLY?*

BECAUSE THAT *THING* LOOKS TO HAVE GOTTEN BORED WITH ITS *LAST* TOY.

NOW WHAT?

NOW WE *FIGHT.*

NOW WE *RUN.*

AWWWWW... AGAIN?!

WE NEED TO BRING DOWN THAT ENTRANCE.

WITHOUT CRUSHING US, PREFERABLY.

CRAP. IT'S COMING!

THAT'S WHAT SHE SAID.

LEAVE IT TO ME.

SORRY, BUT TENTACLES ARE A *DEAL BREAKER* FOR ME!

MOST OF THE TIME.

RUUUUUMBLE

WOOOOM

REEEEEEEEEE!

THIS HAD BETTER BE A WAY OUT. WE CAN'T EXACTLY GO BACK.

I WANTED TO PLAY WITH THE MONSTER...

OKAY, FORGET ABOUT THE UNDERGROUND LAKE...

THIS IS WHERE THE PROPERTY VALUE IS.

LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE AGREES WITH YOU ON THAT ONE.

HELLO! ANYONE HOME?

WE ARE BUT A GROUP OF POOR LOST *TRAVELERS*, SEEKING A BIT OF SHELTER IN THE DARKNESS.

RAP RAP RAP

COME IN! COME IN!

SOUNDS FRIENDLY ENOUGH...

MY *MY*, LOOK AT YOU POOR LOT. DRENCHED TO THE *BONE*.

CAN'T *REMEMBER* THE LAST TIME I HAD VISITORS.

AND EVEN THEN, THEY WERE CERTAINLY *FAR* LESS ATTRACTIVE THAN YOU.

YOU *FLATTER* ME, MA'AM.

AND FLATTERY WILL GET YOU *SO* MANY--

WHAT?

SHE STARTED IT!

YES, WE'RE VERY PRETTY. ***AND*** VERY LOST.

CAN YOU TELL US WHERE WE ARE?

OF COURSE, MY GOSLINGS. YOU'RE IN THE ***CRYSTALFEN LAKE*** CAVERNS.

AND AS ITS ***ONLY*** OFFICIAL RESIDENT, I SUPPOSE I SHOULD OFFER YOU AN ***OFFICIAL*** WELCOME.

SORRY IF THIS IS RUDE TO ASK, BUT...

...***WHY*** DO YOU LIVE DOWN HERE?

DID YOU ***REALLY*** JUST RAISE YOUR HAND?

MY DEAR, IT IS DOWN HERE THAT I'M ***FREE*** TO DO AS I WISH.

NO ONE TRAVELS THIS DEEP.

UHHH, ***WE*** DID.

BAAAUUUUH.

BUT CERTAINLY NOT ON ***PURPOSE,*** MY PET. A LONELY RUIN, LONG LOST TO LIVING MEMORY.

BUT THESE RUINS ARE ***MY*** CURIOSITY. AND MY ***WORK.***

WELL. WE *HARDLY* WANT TO DISTURB YOUR *VERY* IMPORTANT WORK.

IF YOU COULD *JUST* POINT US THE WAY TO THE SURFACE, WE'LL BE OUT OF YOUR HAIR.

HMM. A PATH TO THE *CITY ABOVE* IS WHAT YOU SEEK?

I DO KNOW OF *ONE.* YES, YES. USE ON OCCASION MYSELF. *VERY* WELL HIDDEN.

VERY WELL HIDDEN *WHERE,* EXACTLY?

DEARIE, CERTAINLY ONE AS *WELL-TRAVELED* AS YOURSELF KNOWS THAT SUCH TIDBITS ARE *NEVER* FREE.

AH, BUT *YOU* SAID DOWN HERE, *YOU'RE* FREE TO DO AS YOU WISH.

THEREFORE, YOU'RE FREE TO IGNORE THE RULES ABOUT THESE THINGS *NOT* BEING FREE.

YOU *ARE* THE CLEVER ONE, AREN'T YOU, HANDSOME?

I AM *INDEED* HERE TO PURSUE FREEDOM. BUT I NEVER SAID I'D *CAUGHT* IT YET.

TOUCHÉ.

QUITE **WELL-ARMED** FOR A GROUP OF MERE TRAVELERS, EH DEARIES?

I HOPE YOU KNOW **HOW** TO PUT THOSE LITTLE TOYS OF YOURS TO GOOD USE. BECAUSE **THAT** IS THE PRICE I REQUIRE.

DONE.

WHAT AM I SMASHING?

THERE'S A **TROUBLESOME BEASTIE** THAT'S TAKEN TO NESTING IN THE RUINS AS OF LATE.

RIGHT IN A TEMPLE THAT IS **KEY** TO THE HEART OF MY RESEARCH.

IT'S NOT A CREEPY SORT OF **SQUID** THING, IS IT?

BECAUSE WE ALREADY TOOK CARE OF THAT.

OH NO. NOTHING SO **SIMPLE,** I'M AFRAID.

NOW NOW, BEST BE ON YOUR WAY.

WORK TO DO, AND **PRICES** TO PAY.

WASN'T SHE *NICE?* GAVE US SOMETHING TO KILL AND EVERYTHING!

I MEAN, SHE *SEEMED* WELCOMING ENOUGH.

GREAT TASTE IN GNOMES, TOO.

DO *YOU* TRUST HER?

A MYSTERIOUS OLD WOMAN LIVING ALONE IN A MYSTERIOUS OLD RUIN BENEATH EMON THAT NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT?

NOT LIKELY.

BUT I'M NOT SURE WE HAVE MUCH OF A *CHOICE...*

"I'M SURE THIS WILL BE *FINE.*"

SHE'S A SWEET OLD LADY WHO PROBABLY JUST SAW A *COCKROACH* OR SOMETHING.

I DON'T KNOW, SCANLAN. WOULDN'T SHE HAVE TO BE PRETTY *TOUGH* TO LIVE ALONE DOWN HERE?

KEYLETH HAS A POINT. I DON'T TRUST HER.

YOU'RE ONLY GIVING HER THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT BECAUSE SHE HIT ON YOU.

REALLY, PERCY? JUST BECAUSE SHE THINKS ***I'M*** THE PRETTIEST, THERE'S SOMETHING ***WRONG*** WITH HER?

I THOUGHT ***I*** WAS THE PRETTIEST...

WHAT IS IT, TRINKET DEAR?

WAAAAAAAUH...

OH. HUH. GUYS?

NOT A COCKROACH.

BLAM

THWICK

DUNNO, VEX, IT *DOES* LOOK LIKE IT'S *KIND* OF IN THE BUG FAMILY...

STOP TRYING TO BE RIGHT AND JUST *KILL* IT!

KREEEEEEEEEEE!

AWW, ARE YOU *SCARED* OF US?

WE'RE ONLY GONNA SQUASH YOU A *LITTLE* BIT.

WHUMP

OKAY, THAT'S DISGUSTING.

CRONCH

UM, YOU *REALLY* DON'T WANT TO GET HIT BY THOSE.

INCOMING!

CRONCH

WE'RE *NOT* GOING TO HIT HER WHILE SHE'S UNDER COVER.

CRONCH

CRONCH

THEN WE GO UP *THERE* AND CUT HER DOWN TO SIZE.

ONLY...I DON'T *THINK* I CAN JUMP THAT HIGH...

DON'T HURT YOURSELF WITH THE THINKING, GROG.

CRONCH

"WE'LL KEEP HER DISTRACTED, DARLING."

"AND I *SHOULD* BE ABLE TO GET YOU UP THERE."

I'M NOT REALLY *QUALIFIED* TO BE AN EXTERMINATOR...

AW, *COME ON,* SCANLAN! THIS IS GONNA BE FUN!

WE'LL SHOW *HER* NOT TO POOP EGGS AT--

OH SHI--

FWOOK

SHIT!

IS... IS HE...

HEY! I WAS TRYING TO THREATEN YOU!

INTERRUPTING IS *RUDE!*

SCANLAN IS UP THERE *ALONE.*

THANK GOODNESS FOR THAT *IMPENETRABLE* SKULL OF HIS.

UM. ONE *SMALL* PROBLEM...

KREEEEEEEEEEE...

THIS IS FINE.

TOTALLY FINE.

SO. COME HERE TO REPRODUCE OFTEN?

NOPE. EVEN I HAVE STANDARDS.

TIME FOR THE DIRECT APPROACH.

BOOM

OW.

KREEE--

SKRRRCH

WOOF.

STILL, NOT THE ***WORST*** DATE I'VE BEEN ON.

PROBABLY IN THE TOP TEN, THOUGH.

"***TRULY*** IMPRESSIVE WORK, MY LITTLE CHICKADEES."

I HOPE THAT YOU ALSO TOOK CARE OF THOSE *NASTY* LITTLE EGGS ON YOUR WAY OUT.

...YES. WE DID.

AS THOROUGHLY AS WE COULD.

AAAAAAA!

AAAAAAHHH!!

AAAAAH!

AAAAAAAAAAHHH!

AAAAAAAHH!!

THEN YOU HAVE EARNED YOUR WAY OUT.

"HEED MY DIRECTIONS WITH *CARE*, CHILDREN.

"FOR THIS IS THE ONLY *SAFE* PASSAGE TO THE SURFACE."

THIRTY-SIX, THIRTY-SEVEN...

"AND WERE YOU TO COME VISIT ME AGAIN, I CAN'T PROMISE IT WOULD *REMAIN* AS SUCH.

"BUT FOR NOW, FOR TODAY...

"...A BARGAIN SHALL BE PAID IN *FULL*."

HOW ARE WE GOING TO FIND VAX AND PIKE?

I...I DON'T KNOW, KEYLETH.

FOR NOW, WE'LL JUST KEEP MOVING, AND--

SNIFF

SNIFF

SNIFF

TRINKET?

GROG'S WITH THEM, SO THEY'RE ***PROBABLY*** IN A TAVERN...

TRINKET!

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU TOO.

BUT YOU ***MUST*** STOP DOING THIS.

YEAH, WE'RE GONNA NEED AT *LEAST* TWICE THAT MUCH.

HOW WAS IT?

CHIMERA. YOU?

UNDERGROUND LAKE TENTACLE MONSTER *AND* GIANT INSECT MONSTER.

WITH ACID EGGS.

A-*HEM*. I HOPE YOU'RE NOT TAKING CREDIT FOR *MY* KILLS.

OH, SO *YOU* KILLED THE CHIMERA?

EVEN BETTER. USED IT AS A *WEAPON*.

THAT WOULD BE *NO*, THEN.

WE ALSO GOT THE CLASP'S LEADER TO SPILL SOME DETAILS HE DIDN'T MEAN TO.

IT SEEMS THAT WHOEVER HIRED THEM TO DELIVER THE DRAGON STONE...

...IS A MEMBER OF THE *TAL'DOREI COUNCIL.*

WELL *SHIT.*

THAT ACTUALLY *DOES* CONNECT TO WHAT WE FOUND.

SQUELCH

VERY HELPFUL.

UNDERGROUND LAKE, REMEMBER.

THE *POINT* IS THAT FINCE WROTE ABOUT THE INVESTIGATION BEING LED BY *GENERAL KRIEG.*

THAT HE'D TAKEN A *SPECIAL* INTEREST IN WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

LIKE MAYBE THE "COVERING MY OWN TRACKS" KIND OF INTEREST?

IN ANY CASE, HE SEEMS TO BE OUR BEST LEAD AT THE MOMENT.

BUT HOW DO WE GET TO A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL?

CAN YOU FORGE FINCE'S HANDWRITING FROM THIS?

POSSIBLY.

WHAT DID YOU HAVE IN MIND?

"A LETTER OF SUMMONS TO THE PALACE. FROM FINCE HIMSELF."

TRYING TO *FOCUS* HERE.

SORRY!

"WE CAN SAY THAT HE HIRED US TO INVESTIGATE HIS SUSPICIONS."

YOU MAY PROCEED.

"AFTER ALL, HE'S *FAR* TOO REPUTABLE TO LOOK INTO THE CLASP CONNECTIONS HIMSELF."

"AND THAT IF ANYTHING SHOULD *HAPPEN* TO FINCE, WE WERE TO TAKE WHAT WE FOUND TO THE CITRINE GARRISON."

"TO GENERAL KRIEG, LEADING THE INVESTIGATION."

SIR FINCE IS *MISSING?*

IT APPEARS SO, GENERAL. HIS HOME WAS EMPTY AT OUR APPOINTED MEETING TIME.

AND THERE WERE SIGNS OF A STRUGGLE.

AN ATTACK ON A COUNCIL MEMBER.

WHO WOULD *DARE?*

IS IT POSSIBLE THAT *ANOTHER* MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL IS RESPONSIBLE?

THE CLASP SEEMED TO THINK THAT'S WHO HIRED THEM.

IT'S *POSSIBLE.* THOUGH IT COULD ALSO BE SOMEONE *CLAIMING* SUCH STANDING.

UNFORTUNATELY, WITH URIEL BEING LESS THAN ACCESSIBLE AT THE MOMENT, ***ALL*** COUNCIL DUTIES ARE A CHALLENGE.

AND THAT'S ***WITHOUT*** SUSPECTING ONE OF OUR OWN.

BUT TRULY, I THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR HARD WORK.

YOUR FINDINGS WILL CERTAINLY BE OF USE IN MY INVESTIGATION.

BUT WHAT ABOUT POOR SIR FINCE?

THE GUARD WILL FOLLOW UP ON FINCE'S DISAPPEARANCE.

AND BRING ***JUSTICE*** TO ANY WHO MAY BE RESPONSIBLE.

IT WOULD BE BEST TO END YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THIS WHOLE AFFAIR HERE.

WELL. *THAT* WAS A WASTE OF TIME.

I MEAN, HE DIDN'T *ARREST* US OR TRY TO *KILL* US.

SO I THINK IT WENT REALLY WELL!

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

SMASH SOMETHING?

IF ONLY WE COULD TALK TO URIEL *DIRECTLY...*

YOU WANT TO GET TO THE SOVEREIGN?

LUCKILY, WE HAVE A *SECRET WEAPON.*

I'VE GOT THIS.

AH! MY GOOD FELLOWS! ***EXCELLENT*** WORK!

BURT REYNOLDS, PALACE INSPECTOR. ***FULL MARKS*** FOR YOU TWO.

NOW, IF YOU'LL PERMIT ME ***ENTRANCE*** SO I CAN CONTINUE WITH MY EXAMINATION...

...YOU KNOW WHAT? I'LL TRY AGAIN LATER. AT A MORE ***OPPORTUNE*** TIME.

SEEMS OUR SECRET WEAPON IS A DUD.

SO... PLAN B?

I DON'T THINK WE REALLY HAVE--

THIS IS COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE!

SOVEREIGN URIEL IS NEGLECTING HIS DUTY IF HE REFUSES AN AUDIENCE FOR COUNCIL MATTERS!

SHE SAID COUNCIL.

HEY! WE'RE LOOKING INTO THE COUNCIL!

VERY GOOD, GROG. GOLD STAR FOR YOU.

UM. SHE'S LEAVING...

WOULD YOU CARE TO TELL ME *WHY* YOU'RE FOLLOWING ME?

I ASSURE YOU, MY FRIENDS AND I MEAN YOU NO HARM.

WE'VE BEEN INVESTIGATING THE... DISAPPEARANCE OF SIR FINCE.

WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT A MEMBER OF THE TAL'DOREI COUNCIL IS BEHIND THAT AND *MUCH* MORE...

...AND WE OVERHEARD YOU MENTION THE COUNCIL.

YES, I DID.

MY NAME IS LADY ALLURA VYSOREN. AND *I AM* A MEMBER OF THE TAL'DOREI COUNCIL.

IF YOU'LL ACCOMPANY ME, IT WOULD SEEM WE HAVE *MUCH* TO DISCUSS...

"UH, GUYS? THIS PLACE IS ***REALLY*** FANCY."

WE SHOULD PROBABLY BE ***MORE*** CAREFUL THAN USUAL.

LOOK AT ME, PIKEY!

HAH! GOOD ONE, GROG.

KEYLETH IS RIGHT. ***OBVIOUSLY*** WE'RE HEROES NOW, AND WELL ***BEYOND*** SUCH THINGS...

...BUT STREET VALUE, VAX?

TRUST ME, SISTER. YOU ***DON'T*** WANT TO KNOW.

WERE YOU ALL RAISED IN A ***BARN?***

PERCY, IF THIS FELLOW HERE IS ANYTHING TO GO BY...

...I ***WISH.***

IF WE COULD ***BEGIN...***

OH. RIGHT.

SOVEREIGN URIEL HAS ALWAYS BEEN A GOOD AND TRUSTWORTHY LEADER, BUT RECENTLY...

...BOTH HIS ACTIONS AND THOSE OF EMPRESS SALDA HAVE BECOME ***INCREASINGLY*** SUSPECT.

"AT FIRST, IT SEEMED THAT THEY WERE MERELY AFFECTED BY THE STRESS OF SURVIVING AN ***ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT.***

"BEFORE URIEL ISOLATED HIMSELF FROM THE COUNCIL, SALDA ***INSISTED*** ON ATTENDING ALL MEETINGS WITH HIM.

"ALWAYS WHISPERING IN HIS EAR. ***WHAT,*** I COULDN'T TELL YOU. BUT IT GREW MORE AND MORE WORRISOME.

"NOW, THEY'VE WITHDRAWN COMPLETELY. I'VE BEEN KEPT FROM THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS FOR OVER A ***WEEK*** NOW.

"BEFORE I RAN INTO YOU, I WAS ON THE VERGE OF GIVING UP AND LEAVING.

"ESPECIALLY SINCE ***NONE*** OF THE OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS HAVE BEEN ***NEARLY*** AS VOCAL ABOUT ANY OF THIS."

WELL, THAT FENCE GUY IS PROBABLY BEING QUIET 'CAUSE HE'S ***DEAD.***

SIR FINCE?!

MAYBE NOT THE BEST WAY TO DELIVER BAD NEWS, BIG GUY.

SORRY TO BE THE BEARER OF BAD NEWS. BUT BASED ON FINCE'S NOTES--

AND SOME... LESS THAN ***LEGAL*** SOURCES...

...WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT ***GENERAL KRIEG*** IS INVOLVED IN WHATEVER STRANGENESS YOU'RE DEALING WITH.

HE WAS THE ONE WHO STOPPED THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT.

THE VERY EVENT THAT PREDICATED THE ***CHANGES*** IN THE SOVEREIGN AND HIS FAMILY.

I HAD MY ***DOUBTS*** ABOUT YOU AT FIRST, VOX MACHINA...

US?!

...BUT IT'S CLEAR YOU HAVE THE RIGHT INTENTIONS. AND YOU'VE MANAGED TO UNCOVER TRULY INVALUABLE INFORMATION.

WE'RE JUST TRYING TO FIND OUT THE ***TRUTH.***

AS AM I. AND SO, IT WOULD SEEM WE ARE ALLIES IN THIS.

WHAT WE NEED ***MOST*** RIGHT NOW IS A GLIMPSE WITHIN THE PALACE THAT HAS BEEN BARRED TO US.

WILL YOU ***ASSIST*** ME WITH MY SPELL?

...ME?

READY?

SURE. YUP. *TOTALLY* READY.

SEE ANYTHING YET?

THE *THRONE ROOM.* BUT...

...SOMETHING'S *VERY* WRONG.

WHO WATCHES ME?

GAH!

GONNA GUESS THAT WASN'T A *GOOD* "GAH".

THIS IS ***FAR*** WORSE THAN I COULD HAVE FEARED. WHATEVER THE SOURCE OF THIS DEMONIC POWER...

...IT'S STRONG ENOUGH TO SUPPRESS URIEL'S TRUE PERSONALITY, TO ***PUPPET*** HIM AND HIS FAMILY.

THERE'S NO CLEARER PATH TO POWER THAN CONTROLLING THE POWERFUL.

WITH THE SOVEREIGN AS THE ***MOUTHPIECE*** FOR WHATEVER PLOT THEY--

HAHAMPH.

I MEAN, IF THEY'RE USING HIM LIKE ONE OF THOSE ***HORN THINGIES,*** AND THEIR WORDS ARE COMING OUT HIS MOUTH...

...DOES THAT MEAN THE DEMONS ARE YELLING UP HIS ***BUTT?***

WE NEED MORE INFORMATION. AND I SUSPECT THAT ***MODETH*** HAS IT.

THOSE CLASP GOONS WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST ALL OF US.

"PIKE HAS IT. WE RETURN TO CLASP HEADQUARTERS, IN *FULL* FORCE--"

"INCLUDING TRINKET?"

CLOSED FOR REFURBISHMENT

"*YES*, STUBBY. TRINKET CAN COME TOO."

"WE'LL FIND MODETH. *MAKE* HIM TELL US WHAT HE KNOWS."

I KNEW YOU'D BE STUPID ENOUGH TO COME BACK HERE.

AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT ACTUALLY BE *DIFFICULT* TO FIND.

KILL THEM.

LOOKS LIKE YOU BROUGHT A ***SOLO ACT*** TO THE BATTLE OF THE BANDS, NUMBNUTS.

YOU'RE GOING TO TELL US ***EVERYTHING*** YOU KNOW.

AM I?

DARKENING

HAH! MISSED.

HSSSSSSSSSSSS

OH, I'M GOING TO ENJOY THIS.

I MIGHT NOT EVEN *CHARGE* THE GENERAL FOR THIS ONE.

HSSSSSSSSSSS

HEY! RUDE!

SO WE CAN'T HIT THEM, BUT THEY CAN HIT US.

THAT SEEMS REALLY UNFAIR...

WAAAAuuH!

TRINKET!

YOU INSISTED ON BRINGING HIM...

HMM...

STAND STILL, YOU LITTLE--

HEY, BIG GUY!

GOT A JOB FOR YOU!

YOU *FOOLS!* I *KNEW* YOU WOULD SLAUGHTER MY MEN!

GIVING ME ACCESS TO THE *POWER* I NEEDED!

YOU'VE DUG YOUR *OWN GRAVES!*

IF I'M DIGGING GRAVES...

...WHY ISN'T THIS A *SHOVEL?*

YOU--

THIS IS FOR THE BUTT DEMONS!

SHIT!

NICE ONE!

WOOHOO! GOOD JOB, GROG!

TAKE THAT, MUSIC CRITICS!

GOING TO BE A BIT DIFFICULT TO GET MODETH TO CONFESS WHAT HE KNOWS NOW.

OH. GOOD POINT.

OOPS?

LET'S SEE IF WE CAN FIND WHAT HE WAS HIDING.

HMM...

YOINK!

NO INCRIMINATING PAPERS, SADLY.

HE LIKELY KEPT THE DETAILS IN HIS HEAD.

...SHOULD WE TAKE THE HEAD TOO?

COME ON. LET'S NOT PUSH OUR LUCK ANY FURTHER.

LET'S MAKE OUR EXIT BEFORE WE'RE DISCOVERED.

CLANK

CLANK

CLANK

COULD WE AT LEAST *TRY*--

OOF

WELL, WELL, *WELL.*

AND WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE?

DON'T WORRY. I'VE GOT THIS.

MY TEAM AND I ARE HERE TO EXAMINE YOUR WARES.

ROBERT REYNOLDS

Inspector of Illicit Goods

YOU'RE HERE TO *INSPECT* ILLICIT GOODS?

WHAT *FOR?*

TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE ALL *PROPERLY* STOLEN, OF COURSE!

CAN'T LET ANYTHING BORROWED OR GIFTED SLIP IN AND RUIN THE CLASP'S *REPUTATION.*

...RIGHT?

I WOULD SAY THAT *CERTAIN* SPIRELINGS WHOSE GOALS WANDER FROM THOSE OF THE CLASP ARE A *FAR BIGGER* THREAT.

WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?

...FAIR POINT.

AND IF A CLASP MEMBER AND A...*TEAM OF MERCENARIES* WERE TO DELIVER TO HIM THE FATE HE HAD *EARNED...*

...THEN *GOOD RIDDANCE.*

MERCENARIES? ARE WE GETTING PAID FOR THIS?

YES WE ARE, GROG.

PAID WITH *SAFE PASSAGE.*

QUITE THE *BARGAIN.*

WOW! THAT WAS *REALLY* KIND OF HIM!

OR HE'S ANGLING FOR THE LONG GAME.

HE'S ALMOST *CERTAINLY* PLOTTING SOMETHING.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A *TOMORROW* PROBLEM.

WE HAVE *ENOUGH* ON OUR PLATE.

WAAAAAUH.

WHAT DO WE TELL ALLURA ABOUT MODETH? I MEAN, WE KIND OF ***KILLED*** THE PERSON WE WENT TO QUESTION.

AND WE'D ONLY ***JUST*** CONVINCED HER WE WERE COMPETENT TOO...

EASY! WE JUST TELL HER IT WAS ***TOTALLY*** AN ACCIDENT!

RIGHT. HE JUST ***ACCIDENTLY*** TRIPPED OVER HIS OWN SPELLS.

AND THEN HIS HEAD ***ACCIDENTLY*** FELL OFF.

HEY, IT ***HAPPENS.*** MORE OFTEN THAN YOU'D THINK.

RAP

RAP

RAP

YOU, SIR, MUST BE LIMITING YOURSELF TO THE ***BORING*** BROTHELS.

SHE ***DID*** SAY TO MEET BACK HERE. RIGHT?

I CAN HANDLE THIS--

HOLD UP, BIG GUY. I *DON'T* THINK BUSTING DOWN HER DOOR WILL GIVE US ANY COMPETENCE POINTS.

WHAT IF SOMETHING *HAPPENED* WHILE WE WERE GONE?

THAT DARK PRESENCE *KNEW* IT WAS BEING WATCHED...

BUTT DEMONS...

I'M PICKING THE LOCK. IF SHE'S--

...*NOT* LOCKED IT.

DOORS *ARE* TRICKY, AREN'T THEY?

TRINKET, KEEP *WATCH* FOR US. ALL RIGHT?

WAAAAAAAAAAAAUUUUUH.

THIS IS *DEFINITELY* BAD.

MAYBE SHE'S SAFE UPSTAIRS?

AND MAYBE SHE'LL ***BLAST*** US AS SOON AS WE KNOCK.

YOU DON'T THINK...

I THINK IF THEY'D KILLED ***ANOTHER*** COUNCIL MEMBER, THEY'D WANT US TO ***KNOW.***

MAYBE THERE'S ***SOMETHING*** HERE THAT CAN TELL US WHERE SHE WOULD HAVE GONE.

OR WHAT ATTACKED HER.

SHINY...

WWWW

CRAACK

YEAH, THAT'S A *BAD* SOUND.

TRINKET *TOLD* ME TO DO IT?

CRAAAACK

SERIOUSLY?

AGAIN?!

CRAAAA

ACK

KRA-ACK

PIKE! SCANLAN!

OOF.

THANK YOU, KEYLETH.

I TOTALLY HAD IT UNDER CONTROL.

BUT... THANKS.

SQUAK

YOU CAN'T CARRY US ALL! GET THEM TO SAFETY!

WE'LL FIND ANOTHER WAY DOWN.

PERCY! CAN YOU BUILD US A FLYING MACHINE?!

WELL, GROG, GIVEN THE RIGHT SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT, AND SEVERAL MONTHS OF UNINTERRUPTED WORK...

...UNLIKELY.

WHAT--

I...

I HAVE A *FLYING CARPET!*

STUBBY!

SOME *ASSISTANCE* WOULD BE NICE!

OH. *RIGHT.*

OKAY. *STEERING.*

I MEAN, I *DID* MAKE YOU FLY. I *THINK...*

THAT'S IT!

I WAS THINKING ABOUT *NOT FALLING.*

HOLD ON!

TO *WHAT?!*

IMPRESSIVE.

DON'T ENCOURAGE HER.

SHE'S GOING TO BE INSUFFERABLE ENOUGH AS IT IS.

I *COULD* DROP YOU, YOU KNOW.

LITTLE CLOSE TO THE COLLAPSING BUILDING OF DEATH, AREN'T WE?

I DON'T THINK SO. LOOK AT THE BASE OF THE TOWER.

IT WASN'T ME.

KINDA WAS, BIG GUY.

YOU THINK THE COUNCIL LADY IS GOING TO BE MAD?

WE'LL HAVE TO *FIND* HER FIRST.

SNIFF SNIFF

NO HAWKING IT.

I WASN'T PLANNING TO.

BUT I'M KEEPING THE CARPET.

WELL, IT WAS ***LOVELY*** HAVING AN ALLY ON THE COUNCIL FOR ALL OF FIVE MINUTES.

A LITTLE ***TOO*** CONVENIENT THAT ALLURA IS NOW ***MISSING,*** ISN'T IT?

WITH ALLURA GONE, WE'RE *THAT* MUCH MORE VULNERABLE.

AND I DOUBT THEY'LL BE PLEASED THEIR ALLY IN *THE CLASP* IS NOW DEAD.

WE NEED TO ACT QUICKLY.

YEAH! TIME TO TAKE THE FIGHT TO...

TO...

WHO ARE WE SMASHING AGAIN?

GENERAL KRIEG. ALL THE EVIDENCE POINTS TO HIM.

OH. *RIGHT.*

HE *HAS* TO KNOW WE'RE ONTO HIM BY NOW.

AND IF HE HAS NO QUALMS ABOUT MAKING A FELLOW COUNCIL MEMBER DISAPPEAR...

THEN *WE'RE* PROBABLY NEXT.

NOT IF *WE* STOP HIM FIRST.

HELL YES!

TIME TO BE *HEROES.*

CLANK CLANK

PIKE...

SORRY! WORKING ON IT...

SSHHHFFF

FOLLOW ME. AS *QUIETLY* AS YOU CAN.

WELL. HE MAY BE *EVIL*, BUT AT LEAST THE MAN HAS *TASTE.*

IF YOU SAY SO...

THERE MUST BE *SOMETHING* THAT WILL CONNECT HIM TO THE DEMONIC FORCE CONTROLLING THE SOVEREIGN'S FAMILY.

LOOK FOR EVIL GLOWING THINGS.

RIGHT.

JUST DON'T *TOUCH* STUFF.

HEY, I WASN'T GOING TO! *MUCH.*

PERHAPS IF WE CAN FIND HIS OFFICE...

DOWN THERE!

SCREEEEK

HALT!

NICE. *VERY* OFFICIAL SOUNDING.

UM. WHERE DID THEY GO?

NOTHING HERE.

I TAKE BACK ***EVERYTHING*** I SAID ABOUT THIS MAN HAVING TASTE.

IF WE CAN'T WRECK THE MAN ***HIMSELF...***

...WE CAN STILL WRECK HIS ***STUFF!***

I'M NOT SURE THAT'S A GOOD--

RAAAAAGH!

PORTAL.

STUPID. PAINTING. CHEATED.

TING

THIS WAY. I SEE A LIGHT UP AHEAD.

OH, WOW...

IT WOULDN'T HURT TO TAKE A QUICK ***BREATHER,*** RIGHT?

THAT WAS AN ***AWFUL*** LOT OF RUNNING...

HELPING OURSELVES TO HIS TRINKETS ***COULD*** BRING HIM OUT OF HIDING...

YES, YES. WE CAN LOOT THE PLACE.

HOW ARE WE EVEN GOING TO CARRY ENOUGH TO MAKE A DENT?

I FOUND A BAG!

IT'S NOT VERY ***BIG...***

HOLY SHIT!

MAGIC BAG!

STILL PLENTY OF ROOM!

I *LOVE* YOU, MAGIC BAG.

SOMETHING WRONG, VEX'AHLIA?

BORED OF THE TREASURE ALREADY?

NO, IT'S NOT THAT.

I DIDN'T MAKE THE CONNECTION AT FIRST. BUT THIS PLACE THAT KRIEG FLED TO...

...IT MATCHES THE DESCRIPTIONS I'VE READ OF *DRAGONS' LAIRS.*

SO WHERE'S THE *DRAGON?*

THAT'S WHAT *I'D* LIKE TO KNOW...

HMM, YOU DON'T EXACTLY *LOOK* LIKE TREASURE...

BRIMSCYTHE?

UM, **HELLO!** MY NAME IS KEYLETH. I DON'T ACTUALLY **KNOW** A BRIMSCYTHE.

AND, UH, I'M **REALLY** SORRY I SAID YOU **DIDN'T** LOOK LIKE TREASURE.

THAT ACTUALLY SOUNDS **WAY** MORE JUDGE-Y THAN I INTENDED. AND I **TOTALLY** DIDN'T MEAN IT AS A PERSONAL--

INTRUDERS!

UM.

I THINK I BROKE IT...

HAHAHAHAHAH!

YOU FOOLS!

I NEVER *DREAMED* THAT YOU'D BE BOTH *ARROGANT* AND *STUPID* ENOUGH TO FOLLOW ME HERE.

HEY, *GENERAL FUCKWAD!* MAYBE WE *ARE* ARROGANT AND STUPID--

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF.

--BUT AT LEAST WE CAN *COUNT.* YOU'RE *WAY* OUTNUMBERED HERE, BUDDY.

YOU HAVE NO *IDEA* HOW EASY IT IS TO SOW CHAOS AMONGST *MORTAL SHEEP.*

BIT OF A NON-SEQUITUR THERE. BUT OKAY.

YOUR MINDS ARE SO *PLIABLE.*

SO *DESPERATE* TO BE RULED BY YOUR *BETTERS.*

DID YOU MISS THE PART ABOUT US BEING HERE TO *KICK YOUR BUTT?*

THESE ARE JUST THE FIRST STEPS. THE *EARLY* DAYS.

WHEN WE'RE THROUGH WITH YOU, *SOCIETY ITSELF* WILL COME CRASHING DOWN!

I DON'T THINK HE'S LISTENING...

OH, HE'S *CLEARLY* BEEN REHEARSING HIS EVIL VILLAIN SPEECH FOR A *LONG* TIME.

COULD HAVE USED A FEW MORE DRAFTS, THOUGH.

ARE YOU *DONE*, KRIEG?

'CAUSE WE'RE READY TO SMASH YOU INTO *PASTE!*

KRIEG?

THAT *ISN'T* MY NAME...

OH, SHIT.

I AM BRIMSCYTHE.

AND I WILL BE YOUR DOOM.

OH, YOU'RE BRIMSCYTHE!

THAT'S WHAT THE ORB WAS TALKING--

DOWN!

RRRRR

I. *HATE.* DRAGONS.

REALLY STARTING TO THINK JUMPING THROUGH PORTALS WILLY-NILLY IS A *BAD* IDEA.

HEY, I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST A *REALLY* UGLY PAINTING!

REGARDLESS, WE'RE *HERE.*

ANYONE HAVE ANY BRIGHT IDEAS?

REALLY, ANYONE AT ALL...

TO BE CONTINUED!

(Is it Wednesday yet?)

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CHIME IN WITH IDEAS AT *ANY* TIME.

VEX'AHLIA, *YOU'RE* OUR RESIDENT DRAGON EXPERT, ARE YOU NOT?

DO YOU WANT A *GOOD* IDEA OR *ANY* IDEA?

ANY IDEA.

WAAUUUUUK.

ALL RIGHT. HIS WEAKEST SPOT IS UNDER HIS NECK--

SO I JUST PUNCH HIM ***REALLY*** HARD RIGHT THERE!

...WHICH IS ***ALSO*** THE SOURCE OF HIS LIGHTNING, GROG.

YOU PUNCH IT, YOU'LL BE FRIED IN AN ***INSTANT.***

SO I'LL USE MY ***BIG METAL AXE,*** THEN.

PERCY, COULD YOU SHOOT IT WITH YOUR THINGIE?

QUESTIONABLE PHRASING ***ASIDE,*** I DOUBT ***ONE BULLET*** WOULD DO THE JOB.

AND THE TIME IT WOULD TAKE TO RELOAD IS...***NOT*** IDEAL.

KEYLETH HAS THE RIGHT IDEA, THOUGH. STRIKING FROM A DISTANCE.

GIVE ME AN OPENING, AND I'LL HANDLE IT.

SCANLAN CAN SEDUCE HIM!

YEAH, I ***DON'T*** THINK HE'S IN THE MOOD...

TRAITOR!

WHO DARES--?!

YOU HAVE BETRAYED THE COUNCIL! BETRAYED TAL'DOREI!

AND YOU CALL THIS A HOARD?

A LOW-END BROTHEL PULLS IN MORE THAN THIS ON A SLOW NIGHT!

IDIOT. THIS TIME, I'LL MAKE SURE YOU'RE DEAD!

HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT, SHIT FOR BRAINS!

RRRRRAAAAGH!

SHFF

SHFF

SHFF

GOTCHA.

YOU PUNY...

BAAAAAGHHHH!

TWO WORDS FOR YOU...

...BREATH MINTS.

I PREFER "KILL HIM" MYSELF.

BANG

FWIP

HSSS

YOU CAN'T...HOLD ME!

NOW!

HURKK--

WE'RE ACTUALLY *NOT* DEAD. SPECTACULAR.

BUT HE SURE IS! *HAH!*

WHAT NOW?

OH, THIS IS SO MUCH *MORE* SATISFYING WHEN IT'S--

RRRRRUMBL

SEEMS WE'VE OVERSTAYED OUR WELCOME.

TIME TO *RUN*, PEOPLE!

AWW, BUT THERE'S STILL *SO MUCH ROOM!*

THERE'LL BE PLENTY MORE SHINY STUFF, BIG GUY.

IF WE GET OUT OF HERE.

WAUUUGH!

I KNOW, I KNOW.

I *REALLY* HATE DRAGONS.

ANY DAY NOW...

KRAKOOM

"I DON'T KNOW, I THINK THAT WENT PRETTY WELL, OVERALL!"

WE FINALLY GOT SOME ANSWERS, AND ***EVEN*** WALKED AWAY WITH A LITTLE TREASURE!

AND THIS TIME, SOMEBODY ***ELSE*** TOUCHED THE WRONG THING THAT GOT US ATTACKED!

I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF THOSE CLOUDS...

WE SHOULD GET UNDER COVER SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.

I THINK YOU MEAN ***UNDER COVERS.***

ARE YOU ***SURE?*** BECAUSE I HAVE SOME ***VERY*** TASTEFUL LITERATURE YOU COULD--

I'M GOOD. ***REALLY.*** ANOTHER TIME, PERHAPS.

AS IN--

YES, I ***DO*** UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE IMPLYING.

VOX MACHINA...

OF ***COURSE*** THERE ARE MYSTERIOUS ALLEY VOICES.

JUST WHAT WE NEED TODAY...

HELLO?

IT *IS* YOU. THANK THE GODS.

LADY ALLURA!

SHOULD WE TELL HER WE BROKE HER HOUSE?

IF YOU RETURNED TO MY TOWER, THEN YOU'RE *LUCKY* TO HAVE SURVIVED.

THE EVIL THAT HOLDS THE SOVEREIGN'S FAMILY GROWS *BOLDER.* IT TRACED THE SCRYING BACK TO ATTACK ME.

OH YEAH? WAS IT *WORSE* THAN A DRAGON?

BECAUSE *WE* FOUGHT A DRAGON.

A DRAGON?!

HIS NAME WAS ***BRIMSCYTHE.*** ALTHOUGH YOU KNEW HIM AS ***GENERAL KRIEG.***

A ***DRAGON*** ON THE TAL'DOREI COUNCIL?! THINGS ARE ***FAR*** GRAVER THAN I REALIZED.

YOU SAID HIS NAME ***WAS*** BRIMSCYTHE. I TAKE IT THE DRAGON IS NO LONGER PART OF THE EQUATION?

HE'S A PART OF THE EQUATION WHERE YOU TAKE A ***DRAGON*** AND SUBTRACT HIS ***HEAD.***

CARRY THE TWO...

OUR PROBLEMS ONLY SEEM TO BE ***MULTIPLYING.*** WE NEED TO STRIKE ***QUICKLY,*** BEFORE THIS DANGER GROWS BEYOND OUR ABILITY.

WE ***MUST*** ROOT OUT THIS ENTITY AND SAVE THE SOVEREIGN AND HIS FAMILY. IF NOT THE CITY ITSELF.

I THINK WE GOT SOME MORE FIGHT LEFT IN US.

"UNFORTUNATELY, WITHOUT KNOWING ***WHAT*** IT IS WE FACE, WE MUST SEEK IT OUT WITHIN THE PALACE ITSELF.

"INFILTRATING THE PALACE ITSELF WON'T BE DIFFICULT, WITH THE RIGHT MAGICS.

"BUT IN ORDER TO CAST THEM, I ***MUST*** REMAIN IN A SINGLE LOCATION.

"ONCE YOU ARE INSIDE THE WALLS...

"...YOU'LL BE ***ALONE.***"

PUTTING THE *ASS* IN PALACE, I SEE...

IT WAS A *COMPLIMENT!*

THE *HELL* ARE THESE?!

SOMETHING WE *DON'T* HAVE TIME FOR.

LET'S KEEP MOVING!

ANY TIME NOW!

WORKING ON IT!

KLIK

THEY AREN'T FOLLOWING...

DID YOU *WANT* THEM TO?!

SOVEREIGN URIEL?

HELLO? ANYONE HOME?

WHO DARES INTRUDE ON THE SOVEREIGN'S THRONE ROOM?

I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU THE SAME THING, BUDDY.

SOME QUESTIONS SHOULD NOT BE ASKED.

HEY! DON'T GET MAD AT PIKEY FOR ASKING QUESTIONS WHEN YOU STARTED IT BY ALSO ASKING QUESTIONS!

PIKEEEEEEEEY...

...WILL BE THE FIRST TO DIE!

OW!

DON'T HURT THEM!

THEY STARTED IT!

PIKE'S RIGHT! THEY PROBABLY DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING!

SO, DEFENSE ONLY.

JUST *PERFECT.*

THIS ISN'T GETTING US *ANYWHERE.*

SURVIVING THE *DARK, CREEPY POSSESSION ROOM* WITHOUT MURDERING INNOCENTS SOUNDS LIKE SOMEWHERE TO ME...

OH, OF *COURSE!*

EVERYONE! OPEN THE CURTAINS!

GET *OFF* YOU LITTLE--

FWIP

ZZAAAAP

BANG

RAAAAAAGGGH!

HISSSSSSSSSS

NOOOOOOOOOOO!

THUD

THUD

UH, IT'S STILL BITING ME.

SHE'S ALIVE.

THEY MUST HAVE--

OKAY, THAT *WASN'T* ME.

KRA-KRAK

GREAT, *NOW* WHAT?

MAYBE IT'S... SOMETHING FRIENDLY?

AH YES, THE OMINOUS RED GLOW *DEFINITELY* SCREAMS FRIENDLY...

YOU CAN SET YOUR WEAPONS ASIDE. I MERELY WISH TO TALK.

WE'RE GOOD, *THANKS.*

OF COURSE. AS YOU WISH.

I AM ***THE PRINCE.*** AND I COME BEARING THE MOST DIRE OF WARNINGS.

"THE PRINCE." ***REALLY.***

HOW ***VERY*** LIKE NOBILITY TO ***OBFUSCATE*** ANY DETAILS OF THEIR IDENTITY.

I UNDERSTAND YOUR SKEPTICISM. BUT I RISK MY ***VERY LIFE*** SPEAKING TO YOU LIKE THIS.

A GREAT WAR BETWEEN FIENDISH FACTIONS IS ***ALREADY*** IN MOTION.

YOU HAVE SEEN ***GLIMPSES*** OF THIS CONFLICT SPILLING OUT INTO YOUR WORLD. THE FRONT LINES SHIFT TOWARDS THIS PLANE.

AND ***MORE*** THAN YOUR PRECIOUS EXANDRIA IS AT RISK, SHOULD THE WAR ESCALATE.

AND WHAT'S ***YOUR*** PART IN ALL OF THIS?

I WISH TO ***STOP*** THIS WAR. I ***LIKE*** THIS WORLD. SO MUCH TO ***DO,*** SO MANY ***DEALS*** TO BE MADE.

JOIN ME, AND I'M HAPPY TO MAKE IT ***WORTH YOUR WHILE.*** ONE WISH, ANYTHING WITHIN MY POWER TO GRANT.

THAT'S...VERY GENEROUS.

COULD YOU GIVE US *JUST* A MOMENT TO DISCUSS?

OF *COURSE.* I COULD HARDLY EXPECT YOU TO RUSH INTO A WAR IN *HASTE.*

WELL? HAVE YOU REACHED A DECISION?

SORRY, DARLING. BUT WE'VE HAD BETTER OFFERS.

WE'LL BE ***PASSING*** THIS TIME.

AAAAAAH...!

...HHAHA HHAAAHAA HAAAHAA.

YEAH, THAT SOUNDS LIKE A ***BAD FOR US*** LAUGH...

OMINOUS RED LIGHT. WHAT DID I TELL YOU?

YOU SHOULD HAVE TAKEN MY OFFER.

YOU CAN STUFF IT ***UP YOUR BUTT!***

GOOD ONE, PIKEY!

SO INSOLENT.

PIKE!

To be continued in *Vox Machina Origins* Series V!

(Is it Wednesday yet?)

CRITICAL ROLE
VOX MACHINA ORIGINS

SKETCHBOOK

Early Character Designs and Concepts by Noah Hayes

SIR
GREGORY FINCE

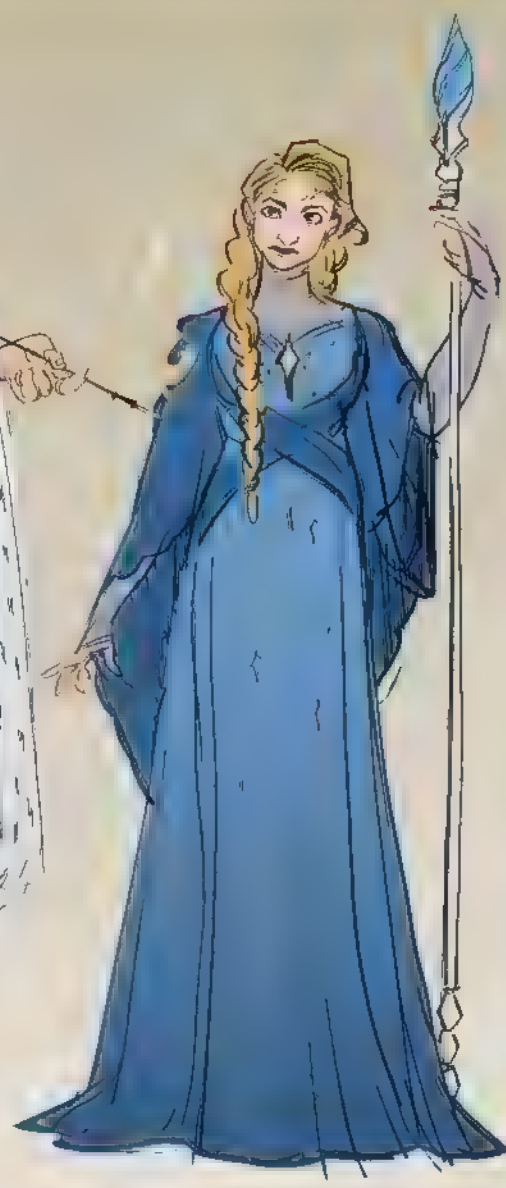
EMPRESS
SALDA TAL'DOREI

ODESSA, ILLIYA,
AND GREN

SOVEREIGN URIEL
TAL'DOREI II

GENERAL
KRIEG

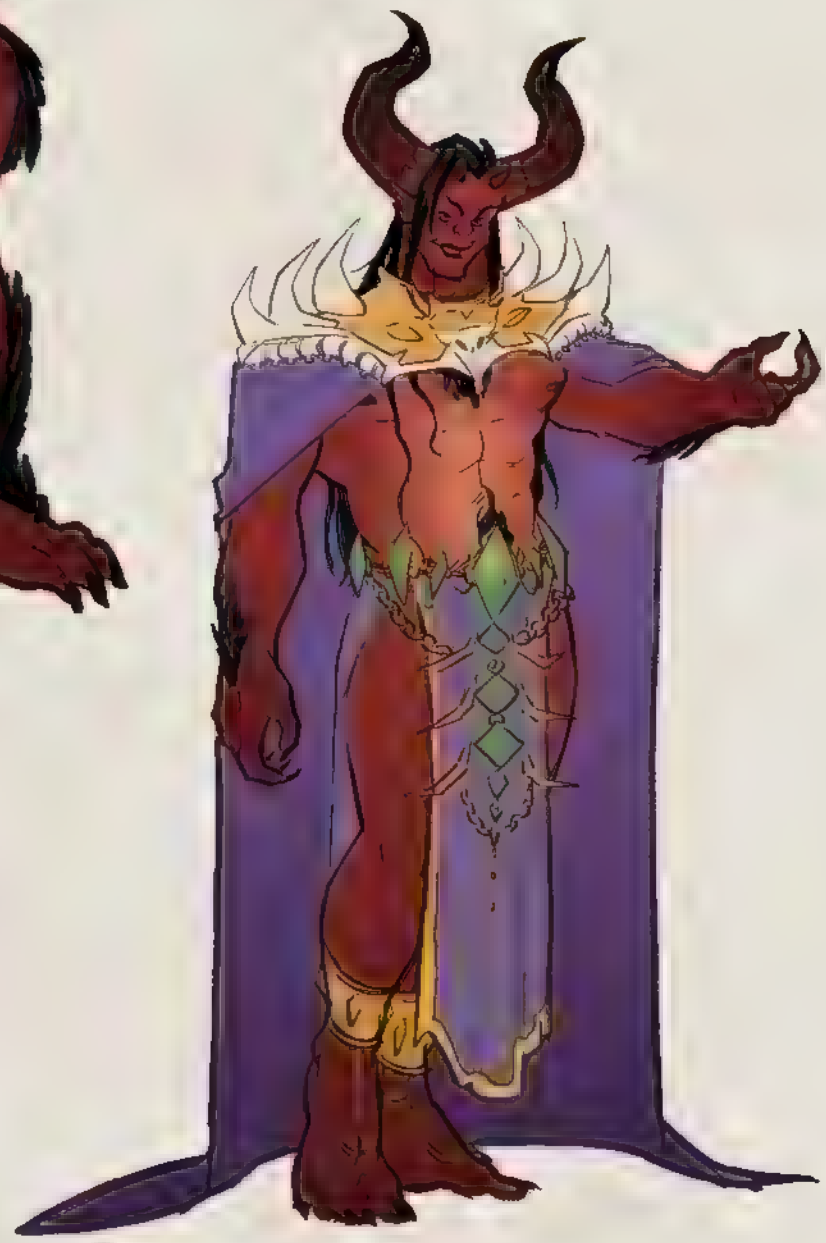
SPIRELING
SHENN



LADY ALLURA
VYSOREN

SPIRELING
MODETH

GERRAZEL
TRUE FORM

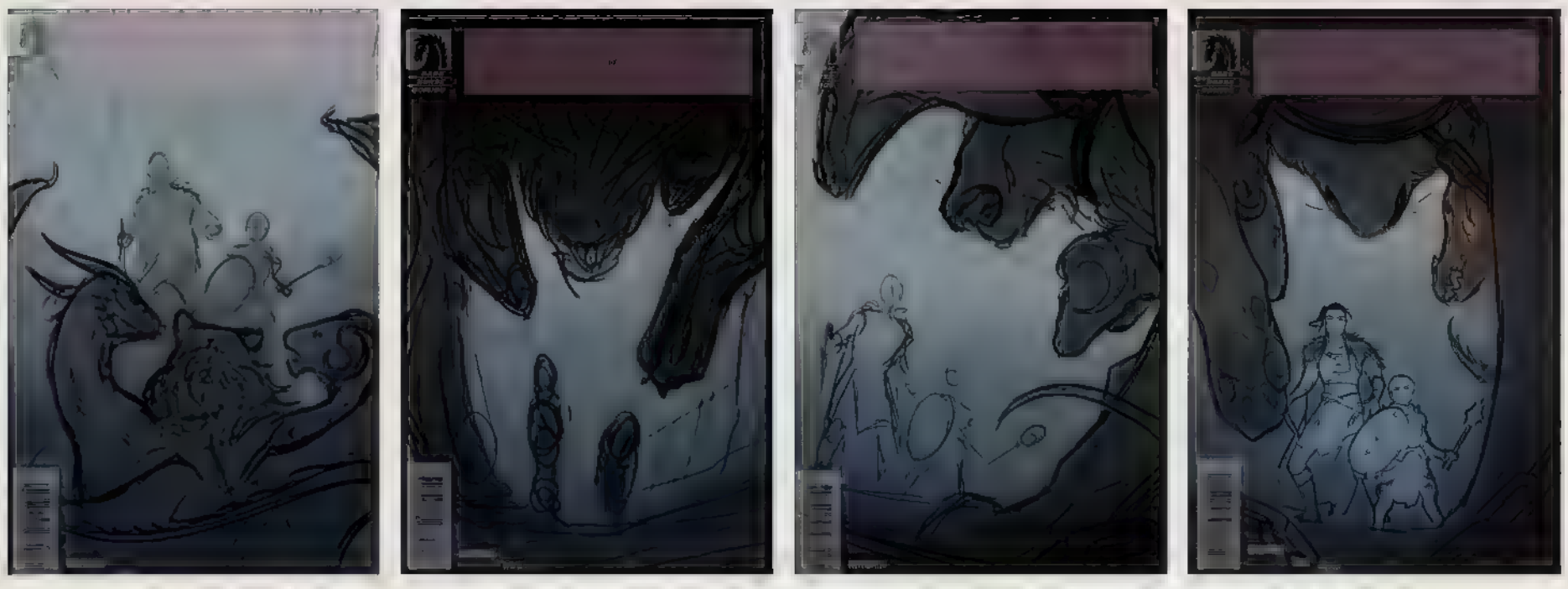


GERRAZEL
HUMANOID FORM

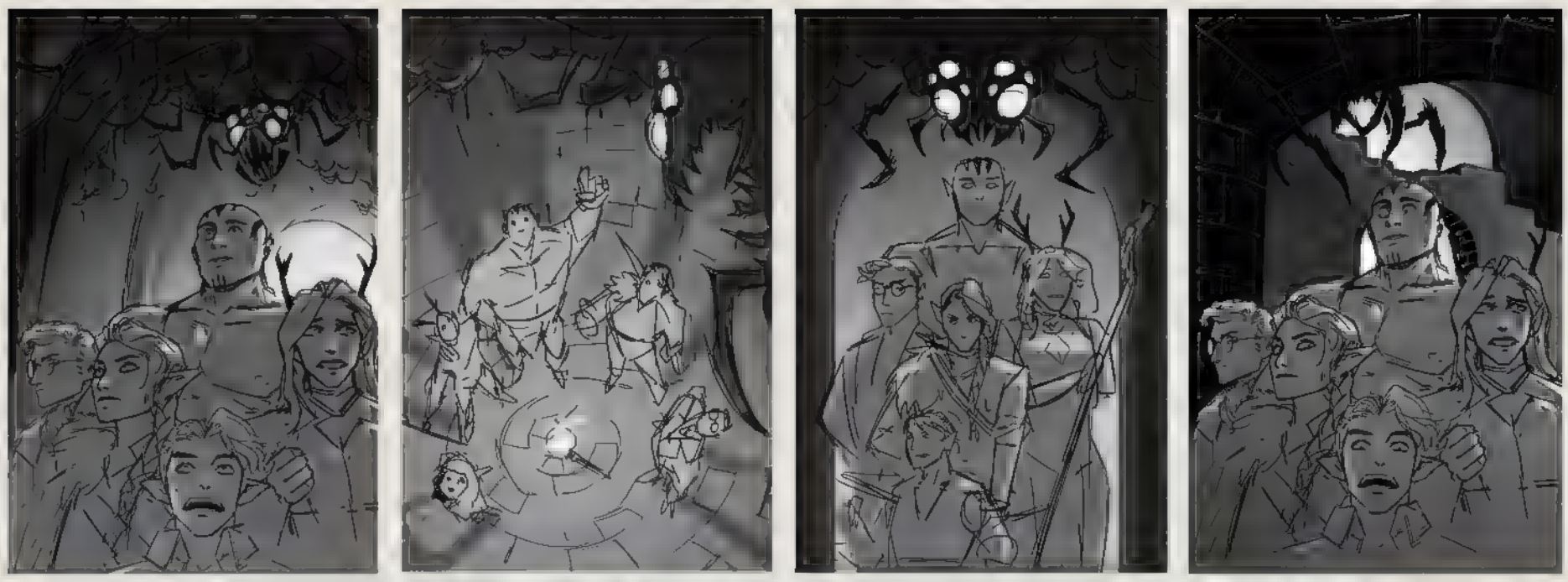
TRYSTA

BRIMSCYTHE

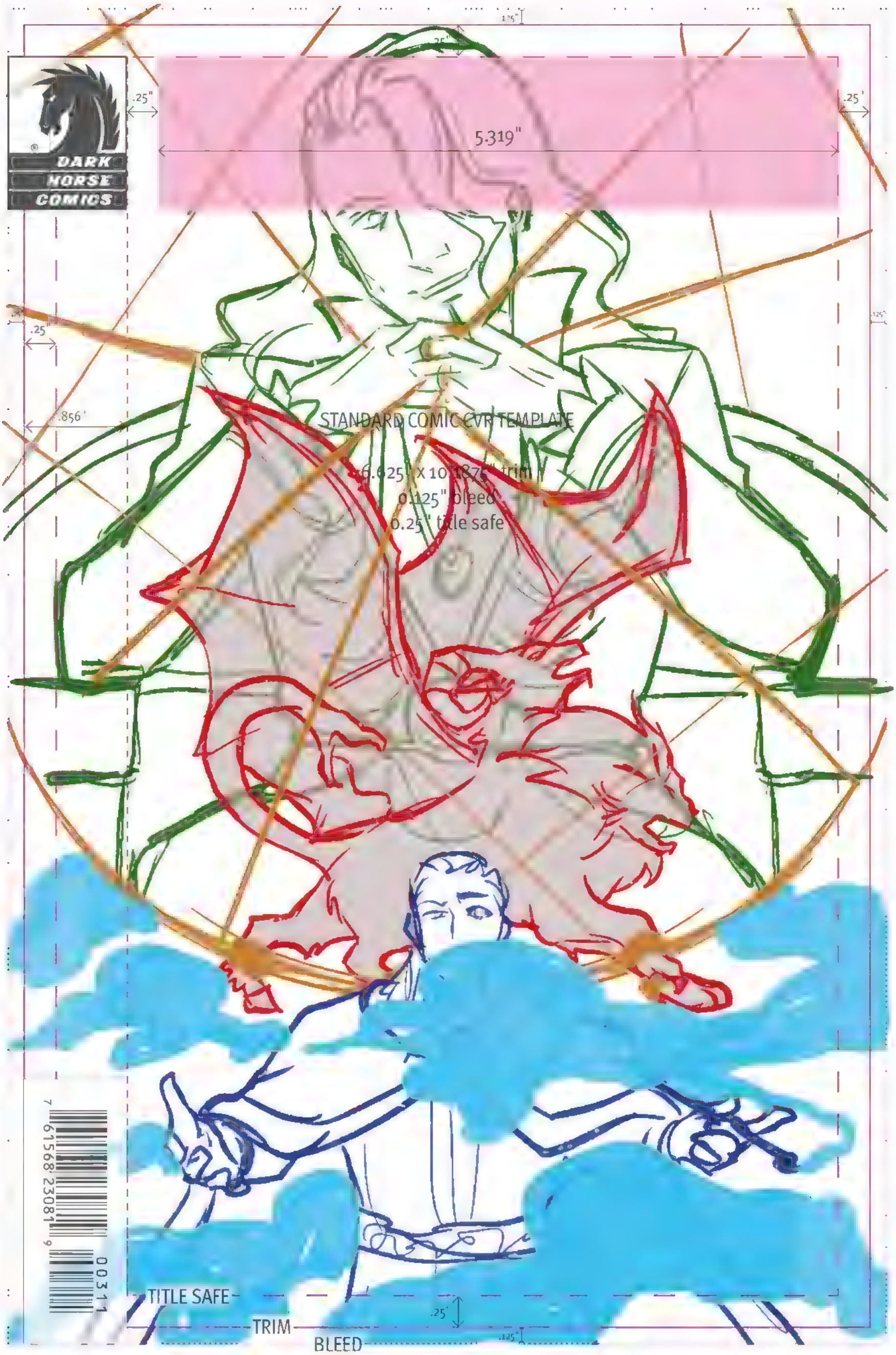
Issue #1 and Volume 4 cover sketches and pencils by Alisvart



Issue #2 cover sketches and line art by Mona Finden

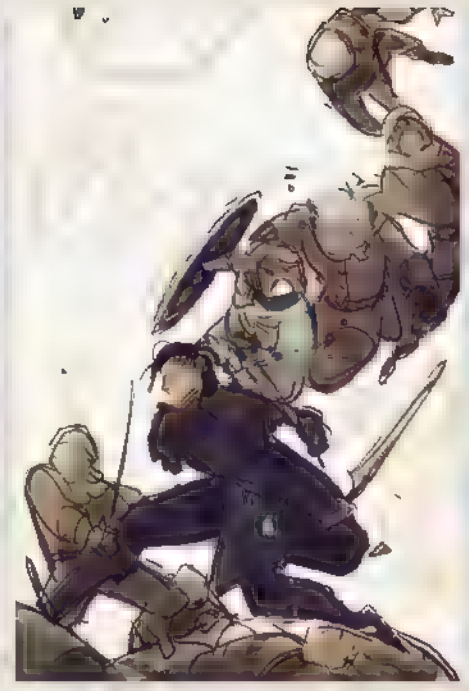
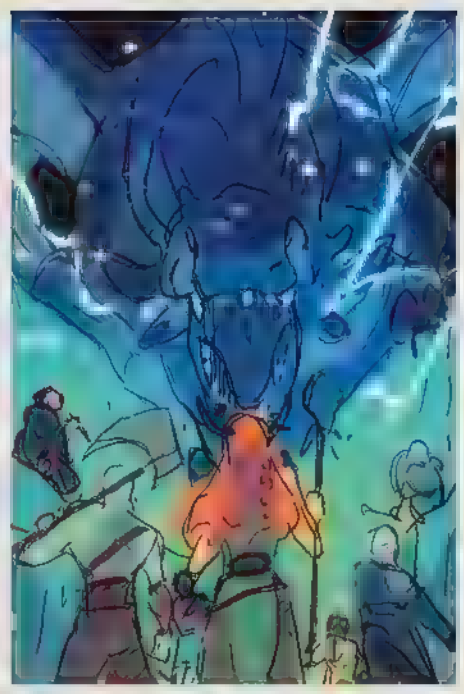


Issue #3 cover sketches and line art by PocketChicken



Issue #4 cover sketch by Riotbones

Issue #5 cover sketches and line art by Jessica Mahon

Issue #6 cover sketches and line art by Jo Mi-Gyeong

HAHA HAHAHA
CAVERN ISLAND

CRITICAL ROLE
VOX MACHINA™
ORIGINS

When Sir Fince disappears, Vox Machina is tasked with investigating his whereabouts.

After some poking and prodding, the team is led to a mysterious basement where dark forces loom. Meanwhile, Vax and Pike face off against a vicious chimera which puts both of their fighting skills to the test, and the rest of the crew navigate an underground cavern in hopes of reuniting with the two. It'll take the help of an unexpected ally to guide the members of Vox Machina to their next objective . . . the Clasp's headquarters.

The campaign continues with series IV of *Critical Role: Vox Machina Origins*, from the *New York Times* bestselling team of Jody Houser (*Orphan Black*, *Stranger Things*), Noah Hayes (*The Avant-Guards*), Diana Sousa (*Critical Role: The Mighty Nein Origins*, *Mall Goth*), and Ariana Maher (*James Bond*, *Xena*)!

DARK HORSE BOOKS

CRITICAL ROLE

SON OF ULTRON